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ABSTRACT

This journal issue provides topics and methods that elementary school teachers can use in writing instruction. The first part of the bulletin describes the nature of the composing process, the types of writing that elementary students produce, and an analysis of teaching strategies. These comments speak to the classroom teacher and reflect recent research as well as concerns and insights by respected authorities on composition. Suggestions are given for establishing and encouraging a classroom atmosphere conducive to creating a good writing program. Part two of the bulletin lists more than 1,000 topics for composition that are addressed to the pupil under the following headings: the writer's world (impressions, thoughts, values, etc.), characterization, narration, imaginative writing, play writing, reporting, and miscellaneous. Part three offers the teacher practical suggestions and motivational techniques for bringing composition into the elementary school curriculum. (RL)

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A Thousand Topics for Composition: Second Edition

(Elementary Level)

Plus Practical Ideas and Strategies for Teaching

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CS 205875

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INTRODUCTION

Many teachers throughout the state of Illinois have contributed topics for writing and suggestions for teaching composition at the elementary school level for this publication. This stockpile of titles has been arbitrarily classified under major categories and subdivisions for easier reference use by teachers and pupils. Junior high and middle school teachers will find many useful topics in this collection, too. Teachers are encouraged to adapt the suggestions for individual pupils and their own unique teaching circumstances.

The first part of this current *Illinois English Bulletin* describes the nature of the composing process, the types of writing pupils produce, and an analysis of teaching strategies. These comments speak to the classroom teacher and reflect recent research as well as concerns and insights by respected authorities on composition. Suggestions are given for establishing and encouraging a classroom atmosphere conducive to creating a good writing program. Part II lists more than one thousand topics for composition that are addressed to the pupil. Part III offers the teacher practical

(This issue is the second part of the Illinois English Bulletin's expansion and updating of its popular publication, "A Thousand Topics for Composition." The first part of this revision, which appeared as the 1980 Spring issue, was compiled under the leadership of Terry Sherer especially for the secondary level. It should be pointed out, however, that neither issue is overly concerned with grade-level boundaries. Writing teachers from grades one through fourteen should be able to adapt ideas from both parts. — Editor.)

suggestions for bringing composition into the curriculum. It should be noted that similar topics may appear in more than one category; however, the focus or purpose will differ.

It is personally impossible to give proper credit to the many classroom teachers, graduate students, and others for their excellent recommendations; nevertheless, appreciation and gratitude are extended to all those contributing to the revision and to the earlier *Bulletins*. This publication is a revision and extension of the *Illinois English Bulletin* printed in February, 1971.

I: BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR THE TEACHER

COMPOSITION

Composing Process

1. Pupils will enjoy reading *Someday You'll Write* by Elizabeth Yates. She describes the writing process — how to begin, how to start, how to continue, and how to derive pleasure from the discipline. This would make a good book for class reading and discussion.
2. During the writing process, writers are organizing their ideas, interpreting their experiences, and discovering how they now relate to those experiences. Writing helps them to organize and rearrange their thinking. This takes time — sometimes much thinking is going on when children are quiet and not moving their pencils.
3. The stages of writing (or the cycle of the craft) involve prewriting, writing, and rewriting. The last stage may not be attained in a given writing situation.
4. Writing has much in common with other art forms (music, sculpture, dance, painting, or drawing). The writer is an artist who is expressing his/her thoughts and emotions through words using pen and paper as the medium.
5. The composing process utilizes an incubation period. The writer dreams, thinks, lives, and plays with ideas while they take shape and form. Ideas take time to develop. Development and refinement of ideas can even take place as the pencil moves across the page.
6. One teacher asked the editor of the *Bulletin* if it would be possible to include a word or two about the importance of the "prewriting" stage and the "teacher-support" that is sometimes necessary. Here is the comment on this inquiry: Research by Stallard at the University of Virginia indicates that good writers spend more time on both prewriting activities and on actual writing than writers of poorer compositions. Therefore time spent on prewriting activities can be a good use of instructional time.
7. Good writers also stop and reread what they have written and often revise as they go along. Don't hurry children during the

writing period but give time for this aspect of the writing process.

8. When pupils are ready to learn more about the editing stage in the writing process, show them how to check for only *one* item at a time: stoppers and starters, spelling, indentation, or quotation marks, etc.
9. Many authors report they like a "cooling off" period. After writing a draft they like to set it aside and come back to it a few days or even weeks later and then start the editing and rewriting stage. They like to stand back and examine it and even discover something new which they didn't recognize at the time they wrote the first draft.
10. Some writers like to "try out" their work by reading it aloud to a close friend or family member. This usually is done after the writer has rewritten it several times and now is ready for a critical reaction.
11. A few authors have reported that they loved the rewriting stage. It gave them time to play around with vocabulary and sentence structures. Probably few pupils attain this stage of satisfaction and delight in composing.
12. Perfection should not be expected.

Pupil Writing

1. Several researchers distinguish between writing in the role of participant or that of spectator. Children frequently write from the standpoint of participant; they are in the story and the actor. The story revolves among them. Occasionally they step aside and view the event from the point-of-view of an observer or spectator. At these times an external view of the situation is attained.
2. For the concept of the functions of writing as being expressive, poetic, or transactional, we are indebted to James N. Britton. He tells us that expressive writing is close to talk and draws heavily upon what occurs in a situation. This type of writing is most common in the elementary school. Poetic writing has the structure of a story or poem. It has the discipline of literary form. Transactional writing is informative or similar to a scientific report. Teachers need to be aware of these three functions of writing and the purposes served by each. Each requires a different mental or thought approach.
3. Let children write from their own experience — the place where all writing begins — even if the topics may seem uncultivated or too much of the street scene. Encourage children to be honest in their writing and not merely write what they think we want them to write.
4. Often we look at a child's draft or first copy and compare it with carefully edited prose that has been rewritten many times. Actually the first copy of a story by a pupil may be a good piece of writing with merit for its own sake.
5. It has been said that writing gives shape to experience. It gives the writer an opportunity to bring an experience closer and to look at it. In fact, writing about an experience is a new ex-

perience in itself. Writing gives shape (purpose, perspective) to experiences. Sometimes an unpleasant event is turned around during writing to become an acceptable incident. It can be a way to adjust to life. One pupil remarked, "How do I know what I have to say until I write it." Another pupil quickly responded when the teacher chided her for just sitting and not writing, "I'm thinking."

6. In a sense all writing is creative, original, and imaginative. Sometimes when the term creative is used, the person is contrasting it with personal recording or factual recording.
7. Imagination is to be encouraged. Tall tales are an excellent form of expression for this quality of thinking because high flights of the imagination encourage bold ideas. At other times imagination may be promoted but also disciplined; that is, the conclusion or unraveling of the plot must be consistent with the elements of the story previously introduced. Sometimes pupils get so tangled in a plot that the only way out is to write, "and then I woke up."
8. While it is an oversimplification to say that "writing is only talk written down," yet that is where children begin. They write as they talk. Children use the language with which they are comfortable. To improve writing, help children express ideas or stories orally.
9. Later help the child become acquainted with edited prose and literary forms by reading quantities of children's literature aloud, showing Weston Woods films or filmstrips, and listening to recordings of poems and other literary forms.
10. Writers write with an audience in mind. Too often it is only the teacher. Provide for peer sharing of stories or other happenings. The response of peers to the writing can be stimulating. It can encourage future writing.

The Classroom Environment

1. A rich literature program supports a rich writing program.
2. A relationship exists among all the language arts — talking, listening, reading, writing, and acting. To improve writing give attention to the other facets of language use.
3. Some of the best topics for writing flow from classroom discussions. Often vague thoughts produce vivid, clear ideas during an active discussion.
4. Creative dramatics can be a profitable avenue or stimulus toward creative writing. This is one way to explore problems, pull ideas together, and provide for self-discovery.
5. The urge to write should be maintained. Formal accuracy should not cloud the primary goal for the teacher.
6. Give children a quiet time to write during the day. An isolated corner makes a good writing area. Have writing supplies available: paper, pencil, eraser, dictionary, pictures, folders, etc. Don't disturb children when they are writing.
7. Establish a graffiti board where pupils can write anything. This may take some self-discipline on the part of the teacher but

after its "first trials" are over, some interesting experiments with word usage will develop.

8. Build a writing center. Use bookcases, old refrigerator boxes, or curtains to create a quiet corner. All writing materials should be in sight and readily available. Post pupil papers on walls or make a class booklet which pupils can read at their pleasure. Provide comfortable chairs, cushions, or rugs. Then — give pupils *time* to write.

Teaching Strategies

1. The format espoused by Jeffrey Summerfield in *Topics in English* would be a good one for teachers to adopt. If one uses the topical approach, a wide variety of writing activities can be extricated. A variety of writing activities on one topic can reach all of the children at some point while at the same time it would give them some initial structure and focus. This would enable teachers to develop a writing or composition curriculum as opposed to a haphazard "let's do some creative writing today" approach.
2. Topic sentences are not always present in recognized literary works so these should not be stressed as a writing technique. Paragraphs are often written specifically to illustrate this phenomenon for use in textbooks — the only place this "rule" can be demonstrated.
3. Diagramming is no aid in understanding how to write sentences or to improve the writing of compositions. A knowledge of diagramming only helps one to diagram specially prepared sentences.
4. Research indicates that practice in sentence expansion (embedding) and sentence reduction can be helpful in writing a greater variety of sentence patterns.
5. Writing communicates ideas and feelings to others. The message is important. Encourage pupils to react to messages and not hunt for errors when reading or listening to stories by other pupils.
6. Teach children how to use self-helps: dictionaries, spelling or reading books, word lists, word charts, etc.
7. Give copies of the *Bulletin* to pupils and let them select their own subject or title for writing.
8. Put several copies of the *Bulletin* on the writing table for pupils to skim through and get ideas for independent writing.
9. Pupils need the opportunity to observe the differences between oral and written uses of language. Let children *hear* how the written language sounds when read aloud. Read aloud selections from children's literature and from children's writings.
10. Let children hear what other children have written. Read to pupils the stories and poems of ordinary, average children. Let them notice that even they can write *that* well. Don't read only "top" examples. Yes, children need to stretch on tiptoe . . . but show the range.
11. Businessmen dictate letters to their secretaries. Let pupils dictate stories to the teacher, aide, or older pupil.

12. After discussing a topic or after a class excursion, record the adventure on the chalkboard. Group dictation is one form of composition.
13. Get any volume of *Foxfire* edited by Eliot Wigginton and discover how one group of students studied oral history in their community. Note how the pictures and illustrations contribute to the recorded interviews or descriptions. Plan a similar project with your class.
14. Most teachers at one time or another have resorted to gimmicks to get pupils started or interested in writing. While some of these might not be detrimental in themselves, they often do not help pupils to analyze, compare, and think.
15. Help pupils understand the purpose of the writing activity; that is, help them determine who is the audience and what should be the response of the audience — laughter, receiving information, finding new ideas, etc.
16. In many classes creative writing (or any writing) is considered "seat work." A beginning sentence or idea is written on the board, the teacher explains... this is what the pupils will write on today, and the pupils are instructed to write "at least four sentences" while the teacher works with a reading group. The pupils receive little encouragement, no time to discuss their ideas, and if the four sentences are not completed by recess, the pupils are required to stay in and complete the assignment. Is it any wonder pupils don't write?
17. Teachers need to be reassured that every piece of writing ***need not be corrected*** by them, ***rewritten*** by the pupils, and ***posted*** on the bulletin board. Teachers need to know that there are different purposes for different kinds of writing and they are not shirking their responsibilities if they allow the child to write and put the work in a folder when that is appropriate.
18. Help pupils to hear how people really talk. Give them a pencil and pad and have them jot down real conversations around school and home. They will discover people use short phrases, single words, and seldom complete sentences or long, complicated structures. Discuss how this will help to write more realistic direct quotations.
19. Consult *The Whole Word Catalogue* by Teachers and Writers Collaborative for helpful writing assignments. The section on language games encourages the investigation of grammar and origins of words.
20. Titles come last when pupils are writing freely and independently. After pupils are finished writing, they can reread the composition and decide on its title.
21. Give pupils a range of topics for writing from which a selection can be made. Encourage pupils to think of their own topics for writing. Give pupils the opportunity to write when they have something they want to express.

Evaluation

1. Avoid corrections and red pencil marking of compositions. Use the Oriental technique of saving face. Comment on the content or message.

2. Note specific skills needed by pupils and plan to teach the skills in a class period devoted to this objective. Don't mix teaching a language or writing skill with the composition process.
3. Label a folder on the writing table "I'm ready for help" in which pupils place stories on which they want help with punctuation, spelling, direct quotation, etc. Then discuss the techniques of writing which the pupil wants to understand.
4. Have a box into which compositions can be slipped for reading by the teacher without the author's being identified. The teacher should make some kind of positive, oral reference to the writing.
5. Do something with every paper pupils write. (Omit the red pencil act.) The story may be read to the class by its author, the teacher, or another pupil. It may be displayed on the bulletin board or writing table corner. Some may even be published in a classroom newspaper or magazine. The teacher might talk to the author about the paper. Papers should be stored in a pupil folder for safekeeping and future reference.
6. Discussion can be the best correction.
7. Have pupils keep individual folders in which to store unfinished compositions, completed stories, or ideas for future writing. Occasionally have pupils go through their folders to find their own assignment. This can be a new writing task or the editing and rewriting of a previous paper. Occasionally the teacher can go through folders with pupils and note progress and skills to be developed.
8. If pupils become deeply involved in a given writing assignment, they will spend considerable time and effort on the project. However, do not expect the same effort to be expended on assignments immediately following.
9. Young pupils often write "The End" at the end of a composition. This frequently signals they are finished with that paper. Accept it, talk about it, but don't ask pupils to edit or rewrite. Use that time for writing a new piece.
10. Evaluate the entire writing process, not just the end product.

II: WRITING TOPICS FOR CHILDREN

THE WRITER'S WORLD

All About Me

1. Things I like best about myself.
2. Things I want people to know about me.
3. What I am really like.
4. How I see myself.
5. The real me.
6. My favorite toy.
7. My favorite book.
8. Things I don't like and why.
9. My favorite movie (holiday, TV program, comic book) is....
10. The things I love to touch.
11. My favorite menu.
12. The foods I love to eat.
13. When I was little....
14. Once when I was five, I....
15. These are a few of my favorite things.
16. The commercial on TV I like best is....
17. Silly things I've done.
18. When I'm alone, I like to....

19. How I feel in the dark.
20. Here are the good and bad aspects of my personality.
21. How my family celebrates a holiday.
22. What makes me happy when I'm sick.
23. My favorite television show is ... because....
24. I am sad when....
25. The saddest thing that happened to me was....
26. I am happy when....
27. The best thing that happened to me was....
28. The sport I like is... (fishing, baseball, etc.).
29. My favorite things which I keep in my room.
30. The present I would like to receive.
31. It's my birthday today.
32. Our family is....
33. My biggest worry.
34. I would like to own....
35. The thing I treasure most.
36. I am necessary in my family because....
37. When school is out for the next holiday I will....
38. What I like (hate) about school.
39. How I decide what I'm going to wear in the morning.
40. A memorable experience.
41. My new shoes are too tight.
42. Buying a new pair of shoes.
43. The first scuff on my new shoes.
44. What I think about brothers and sisters.
45. I am afraid of....
46. A brave thing I did.
47. Something that really was hard for me.
48. This really hurt.
49. Spending a day at the county (state) fair.
50. I like to camp with....
51. Going to summer camp.
52. Visiting a friend or relative in another city.
53. I was homesick when....
54. On our vacation, we are going....
55. Going to a carnival or amusement park.
56. My earliest memory.
57. The best (worst) thing that ever happened to me.
58. The most fun I ever had.
59. The funniest thing I ever did was....
60. What fascinates me.
61. My favorite game.
62. After school, I like to....
63. How I play with my Barbie dolls.
64. My favorite day of the week.
65. My most embarrassing moment was....
66. How I feel when I'm sad.
67. What makes me giggle?
68. My pet peeve.
69. My favorite vacation.
70. My favorite way to spend leisure time.
71. My favorite saint is....
72. Where I was born.
73. My family is kind of....
74. My secret hide-out.
75. I go to _____ to be alone.

Exploring My World

1. My block (neighborhood).
2. On my street.
3. Our school is....
4. The school cafeteria.
5. In the rain I can....
6. What I saw on the way home from school yesterday.
7. A place I would like to visit.
8. A place I have visited.
9. The perfect place to live.
10. A room or place I call my own (a description).
11. How I'd live without electricity.
12. What I would change to make my life better.
13. If I could make a new world....
14. The house I live in or would like to live in is....
15. My favorite music group and why.

16. While watching the wild birds at the feeder, I saw....
17. Buying a new pair of shoes.
18. It's morning again.
19. Some signs of fall are....
20. Spring reminds me of....
21. A crisp day in fall reminds me of....
22. The day after Christmas.
23. The day after my birthday.
24. On a saint's day we....
25. Walking in the rain is....
26. When I plant a seed, here is what happens.
27. I think George Washington (or other famous person from history) would be amazed to see....
28. Life with (without) my brother or sister.
29. Things I notice on the way to school.
30. I skinned my knee today.
31. Cooking with Mom (Dad).
32. My first home run.
33. My first dance recital.
34. My first piano recital.
35. My first demonstration in 4-H.
36. Cheerleader tryouts.
37. My favorite flower (description).
38. My best friend.
39. My favorite pizza place.
40. Oh, that toothache.
41. Broken bones.
42. My first bicycle.
43. Encounter with a snake.
44. When I became a basketball star (for a night).
45. My first garden.
46. Practicing the piano — yak or yea.
47. The night the air was still.
48. 4-H Fair or 4-H Fun Night.
49. Experiencing a tornado.
50. I love parks.
51. My most favorite day of the year.
52. My favorite ride at the fair.
53. I love McDonald's.
54. My first swimming lesson.
55. Our neighborhood clubhouse.
56. Moving and making new friends.

My Impressions

1. My impressions of an exciting game.
2. The song of the wind as it howls around the corner at night.
3. Wading in a mud puddle is....
4. Swimming in the summer time.
5. A cool swim on a hot day.
6. Mud is....
7. Ice cream on the Fourth of July.
8. Rock 'N' Roll music.
9. A kitten's soft purr.
10. A calf's pink tongue.
11. The woods at night.
12. The feel of velvet.
13. The dawn of a new day.
14. Something shiny and bright.
15. The moon (stars, sun) reminds me of....
16. Looking carefully at an object in the room (description).
17. A person in action.
18. What makes a good book.
19. Shadows at night.
20. Staying up for a late TV show.
21. Soft poached eggs.
22. Roast turkey on Thanksgiving.
23. The first snow fell last night and people's lawns look like....
24. The stars.
25. The sun.
26. A train whistle.
27. Sleet is....
28. Slush is....
29. Christmas morning.
30. A rugged mountain range.
31. Snow is....
32. A snowy winter day.
33. A TV set.
34. My sneakers.
35. My old blue jeans.
36. A sunny day in spring.
37. A windy day.
38. Autumn leaves.
39. Listening to my own record player.
40. A cold day.

41. A hot day.
42. The clock.
43. Our flag.
44. The sound of things.
45. The taste of things.
46. The exact color of a nearby lake.
47. Changing seasons.
48. The song of the robin.
49. A dog's long ears.
50. A cocker spaniel puppy.
51. A dachshund.
52. A Saint Bernard dog.
53. A walk through the forest.
54. A baby's cry.
55. A dark room.
56. The stadium filled with excited people.

If I Were

1. A bumblebee.
2. A white cumulus cloud.
3. A dream.
4. Twelve feet tall.
5. A rock star.
6. A fly.
7. A mouse under the star on top of a Christmas tree.
8. A mosquito buzzing in people's ears.
9. A little lost bunny.
10. A falling star.
11. A rushing mountain stream.
12. A friendly lion.
13. A talking parrot.
14. A toy teddy bear.
15. A tiny raindrop.
16. A single ray of sunshine.
17. A baseball used in the World Series.
18. A college pigskin (football).
19. As small as a blade of grass.
20. The engineer on a toy electric train.
21. The pilot of a jet airplane.
22. The driver of a red fire truck.

My Thoughts

1. I wonder why....
2. I remember.
3. I think.
4. I suppose.
5. Love means....
6. Happiness is....
7. Kindness is....
8. What red (any color) means to me.
9. The spookiest thing I ever saw (real or imaginary).
10. When I order in a fine restaurant, I....
11. What Christmas means to me.
12. What Hanukkah means to me.
13. What summer means to me.
14. The happiest day of my life.
15. The funniest thing I ever saw.
16. Things I can't see or touch.
17. My favorite color is _____ because....
18. What I like (dislike) about school.
19. To me, spring means....
20. Swimming means....
21. The things I fear.
22. When it is dark, I like to think of....
23. The best age to be.
24. My favorite kind of party.
25. My favorite television show.
26. Ten things in the world I would change.
27. Things I would like to cook.
28. A book I liked to read was....
29. I like to rake leaves because....
30. Sometimes my dad (mother) lets me....
31. In spring, I feel like....
32. The feeling in the pit of my stomach when I'm going to be punished.
33. My friend died recently.
34. Friday night means....
35. It frightens me to think of....
36. When I get mad, I....
37. The experience I most want to remember (forget).

38. What makes a best friend.
39. Nightmares scare me.
40. What is quiet?
41. What is noise?
42. What is peace?
43. What makes me cry?
44. What I like to do.
45. A city I would like to visit.
46. The best age to be.
47. What I could do with some boards and a saw.
48. What I could do with a yard of felt and some glue.
49. Babies can't talk because....
50. My favorite fairy tale is _____ because....
51. The things I fear.
52. When I am alone, I like to....
53. Sometimes I wonder about....
54. A friend is....
55. My best friend is....
56. The place I would most like to explore.
57. If I could be anywhere else right now, I'd be in....

My Ideas

1. Having fun is....
2. Secrets are....
3. Excitement is....
4. War means....
5. A neighbor is....
6. A good teacher is....
7. A full piggy bank means....
8. Being (seven) (eight) means....
9. Vacation fun is....
10. Summer is....
11. What is green?
12. What is a mother (a father)?
13. How it feels to be disappointed.
14. What I want to contribute to the world.
15. Christmas time is special because....
16. What can I make with colored leaves?
17. Leaves turn colors because....
18. A clown looks like....
19. To hibernate means....
20. Loneliness is....
21. To succeed is to....
22. When I get drowsy, I....
23. Going to the lake means....
24. If I could invent something to make work easier, I would invent....
25. If I could invent something to make life more fun, I would invent....
26. If I could change my block (neighborhood), I would....
27. If I had a big empty box, I would make....
28. Teachers should think about....
29. The best way to change someone's mind is to....
30. What makes me madder than anything is....
31. What causes a good laugh?
32. I made angel prints in the snow.
33. Why practicing the piano is so hard.
34. Avoiding cleaning my room.
35. Where's my toothbrush?

My Dreams

1. What I think about before I go to sleep.
2. A dream I had.
3. A strange dream.
4. Dreaming of warmth and beautiful things.
5. I dreamed I was a spaceship and. . . .
6. Just before I woke up, I....
7. I'm glad it was only a dream.
8. If I had a million dollars.
9. Clouds remind me of....
10. I'm going to ask Santa for....
11. I'm going to share Christmas joy by....
12. Where I would like to be right now.

13. I wish I could travel west as a pioneer.
14. What I would like to be and why.
15. In November, 2001, I'll be....
16. If things could talk, think what they would say.
17. If I went to the moon....
18. When I grow up, I'm going to. . . .

My Actions

1. What I like to do best on the playground.
2. The method of travel that I enjoy most.
3. If I had a special present, here's how I would decorate the box.
4. If I was snowed in, I would....
5. The presents I am going to buy for my family are....
6. When I am sick in bed, I....
7. If I could do whatever I wanted to in school, I would....
8. If I could go to any country to live, I would go to....
9. If I found a hurt animal, I would....
10. I laugh when....
11. I cry when....
12. What I do on the way home.
13. Early tomorrow morning I'm going to run away. Here are my plans.
14. Here are my plans for spending the winter as caretaker of a deserted day camp.
15. I invented a new toy to amuse ten-year-old children that will. . . .
16. I love to visit my grandmother (grandfather) because....
17. Life for a circus performer is never dull.
18. How I spent a week on a deserted island.
19. The day my pet got in an animal fight.

My Values

1. What I like to do in my free time.
2. Why I am thankful for....
3. What my friends mean to me.
4. How I feel when my parents' friends come over.
5. The things I value most are....
6. Being lazy didn't pay off when. . . .
7. Honesty to me means....
8. White lies don't hurt anyone.... Or do they?
9. If you were to receive an award and were later told you would not get it, how would you feel and what would you do?
10. How I make choices.
11. Is shoplifting merely a simple game?
12. What is important to me today?
13. Brotherhood means....
14. What is war?
15. Can different people hold the same values? Do values ever change?
16. The greatest joy of my life.
17. The greatest sadness of my life.

CHARACTERIZATION

Personal

1. If I could dye my hair, I would. . . .
2. If I were the teacher, I would. . . .
3. If I were president....
4. If I were principal....
5. When I grow up, I want to be. . . .

6. People think I am....
7. If I were born in _____ (country), I'd....
8. What's it like to be twenty-six, Mommy?
9. If I could make one phone call, I would call....
10. I get angry when....
11. I often wonder (worry) about....
12. What I like about me....
13. If I were a....
14. When I was younger.
15. If I were a snowman....
16. As a scarecrow I would....
17. Next year I'm going to....
18. How I want to dress.
19. Why do I have to wear glasses?
20. Giving myself a hair cut.
21. Dressing up in old clothes.
22. Earning my own spending money.
23. Getting an allowance.

Studying People

1. The trait I admire the most in a person.
2. A friend is....
3. The people I like (hate).
4. The members of my family are always....
5. I admire _____ (name a person).
6. The one I love most.
7. My favorite aunt (uncle).
8. My favorite kind of person.
9. My favorite cousin.
10. My best friend.
11. A beautiful person.
12. He made me laugh.
13. The famous person I would most like to be.
14. The most unusual person I know.
15. My first friend.
16. The old man in the park.
17. The friendly lady at church.
18. Life changes when guests arrive.
19. My reading aide.
20. The man in the candy shop.
21. Watching truckers in the truck stop.
22. The big kids on my street.
23. The kids in the school band.
24. Half-time at the basketball game.
25. Dad and his new car.
26. The church choir.
27. People dashing in the rain.
28. Watching a baby sleep.
29. The ballet dancer.
30. Twins have secret fun.

Plants and Animals

1. A big fish story.
2. The tiniest elephant.
3. Life under a rock.
4. The life of a lemon.
5. Sharks.
6. A funny creature.
7. Life under the sea.
8. How the turtle got his shell.
9. How the skunk got his smell.
10. I think trees in the winter feel....
11. Consider the mighty ant.
12. If I were an ant.
13. My pet.
14. My favorite animal.
15. How a tree feels on a cold night.
16. I'm a lazy kitten.
17. Little lost bunny.
18. Trees sway and move.
19. Animals on the farm.
20. Animals in the water.
21. Animals that fly.
22. Flowers.
23. Weeds.
24. Grasses and cattails.
25. Bushes.

NARRATION

Personal

1. My pet rock.
2. What I would be like as Santa Claus.
3. If I met a lion on the playground.
4. My adventure in the jungle.
5. The day the rain wouldn't stop.
6. My new invention.
7. My trip to Fantasy Island.
8. I wonder why....
9. A million to one and I had to....
10. I was so afraid when....
11. I found a....
12. I wish that....
13. Preparing lunch and cleaning the house.
14. When it is the last day of school, I will be....
15. Why I enjoy....
16. I remember how scared I was when....
17. When I have been bad, I feel....
18. I was almost frightened to death once when....
19. When I rake leaves I....
20. I floated on a cloud and....
21. My skateboard and I.
22. When my cat learned to fly....
23. So I said to my mother....
24. I didn't mean to do it.
25. We did it together.
26. How can I explain what I've done?
27. Why did it have to be me?
28. The day I walked on stilts.
29. Someone made fun of me.
30. My dog is lost.
31. The day my dog learned to talk.
32. Going to Grandmother's, I got on the wrong plane.
33. One day I went downtown. On the way I found a fifty-dollar bill.
34. What I think about before I fall asleep.
35. My most exciting time.
36. My first haircut.
37. My first report card.
38. My autobiography.
39. Something I remember from when I was little—an incident which is representative of much of the child's experience.
40. When I broke a rule (trouble at home or school).
41. When I loved me (a proud or very happy time).
42. How I was frightened.
43. My most disappointing moment.
44. It couldn't happen to me—but it did.
45. I was so embarrassed.
46. Was I sick!
47. I was so scared.
48. Once I dreamed.
49. The funniest thing I ever saw.
50. I learned my lesson.
51. I'll never forget this.
52. The best thing that ever happened to me.
53. When I cried.
54. The saddest day in my life.
55. Once upon a time, I....
56. Our trip.
57. Camping in the woods.
58. A canoe trip I'll not forget.
59. Learning to play tennis.
60. Teaching a friend to skate.
61. Earning money.

Stories

1. The magic dragon.
2. That creature in my backyard.
3. Basketball.
4. My secret friend, the Ghost.
5. The pirate.
6. Each minute seemed like an hour.
7. Playing the game.
8. The trial.
9. Caught in the act.
10. At last the day was over (one sentence of a story, build up from there).
11. The discovery of bubble gum.
12. Famous lions I have known.

13. The accidental wonder.
14. Fractured fairy tales.
15. And then it happened.
16. There were strange footprints in the sand.
17. A funny story.
18. Late for school.
19. My puppy thinks....
20. Lost in a wilderness.
21. There is only one way to do something and that is....
22. What would happen if....
23. When it starts to get cold, animals....
24. Winter animals are....
25. A baby chick can....
26. Let's go fly a kite and....
27. You are the last person on earth, and the phone rings.
28. How the _____ got its... (tiger, tail).
29. The alligator in our backyard.
30. A secret cave.
31. The friendly dinosaur.
32. The timid fawn.
33. Celebrating a feast day.
34. Riding a cow pony.
35. The cowpuncher's lost dog.

Special Days

1. The happiest day in my life.
2. My most exciting day.
3. My favorite day.
4. My happiest day.
5. My most memorable day.
6. My nicest birthday party.
7. My birthday wish.
8. Holiday stories.
9. A Halloween surprise.
10. On Saturday, I....
11. How my family spent the Fourth of July.
12. The year Santa was lazy.
13. On Christmas Eve, I'll feel....
14. On Christmas morning, I....
15. The Valentine box.
16. April Fool's Day.
17. When the ground hog overslept.
18. Black History Week.
19. On Martin Luther King Day....
20. St. Patrick's Day.
21. Hanukkah, the Feast of Lights.

Science Fiction and Tall Tales

1. Electronic brains in school.
2. Travel to other planets.
3. Running away to outer space.
4. Three spacemen visit school.
5. Flying saucers.
6. The time machine.
7. Explorations into the dark.
8. The sea and deep caverns.
9. Tiny people invade the classroom.
10. The autobiography of the red knight.
11. Fabulous insects.
12. The adventures of....
13. The polar voyage.
14. The last encounter.
15. Hot air balloons and winged creatures.

Mystery Stories

1. The lost lollipop.
2. Lost in the warehouse.
3. The Martian invasion.
4. Mystery of the missing gym shoe.
5. Creature from the dark.
6. The case of the tiny giant.
7. The haunted cabin.
8. The missing key ring.
9. The robbery of the lunch money.
10. Invasion of the art supply room.
11. The giant squid.
12. The lost baton.
13. The coming of the secret agents.
14. The mystery of Judy Creek.
15. The detective nearly missed.
16. What is my ghost doing here?
17. The telephone mystery.
18. The ghost of Allen's Alley.

Autobiographies

1. The life of an ice cream cone.
2. The adventures of a ball point pen.
3. The diary of a green apple.
4. A stuffed bear's life story.
5. Tale of a duck's life.
6. The journey of a paint box.
7. The crayon's life story.
8. The end of the light bulb.
9. The life of a special T-shirt.

IMAGINATIVE WRITING

Challenge of the Unknown

1. An alien from another planet has just landed. How do you greet him? What kinds of things do you tell him or show him about earth? Are you scared of him or so curious that your fear is overcome?
2. You wake up to find you have grown wings. How do people react to you? How do you feel? Since you can now fly, where are you going to go? What will you see?
3. It is snowing in the middle of summer. Why? How did this happen? How are people reacting to it? What do you do? Does it stop or does it continue?
4. You are the caretaker of a huge resort hotel in the mountains of Colorado. It is winter; the hotel is closed for the season. You are snowed in. You have plenty of food and heat but no television. What kinds of things will you do for entertainment till spring? You may have friends or family snowed in with you if you wish.
5. You can tell the future. What kinds of things do you see happening in the future?
6. Suddenly it is discovered that you are a genius capable of doing college work. Will you go to college? If so, what will you study? Will you stay in your present class? Why?
7. How can this school be improved? Although it's all right to have more entertaining things to do, remember to include suggestions for how you could learn more, too.
8. You have developed a new breed of dog or cat. What is the name of the new breed? What does it look like? How big is it? If it is a dog, what group will it belong to — hunting, herding, toy?
9. You can return to any period in U.S. history that you wish. What period will you return to and why? What happens to you once you go back?
10. You are made king of a South Pacific island. You are to make up all the laws that the people live by. What kinds of laws will you make up?

Composition Starters

1. Dangling my feet over the edge....
2. Suddenly the rope snapped!
3. Climbing over the wall, I saw to my shock (surprise, dismay, amazement, delight, joy)....

4. I never thought I'd see the day when....
5. For as long as I could remember, we had always done it that way — that is, until the day....
6. Hanging on by only one arm....
7. The coffeepot boiled over, the telephone rang, the baby screamed, and in the midst of this hullabaloo there came an urgent rapping at the side door....
8. Although I knew it was "bad manners," I just couldn't resist peeping through the crack in the door....
9. Great-grandmother would have been shocked to the toes of her high-button shoes if she knew....
10. I had finally saved enough money for that model plane and was on my way to the Hobby Shop, with my cash safely stashed in my life back pocket, when....
11. I was lost, a thousand miles from nowhere, when to my amazement I perceived on the horizon....
12. While riding an iceberg one day....
13. I slowly lifted the lid and....

Other Times and Place

1. One hundred years from now, I would invent....
2. Put yourself back in the times of Lewis and Clark.
3. When I was two.
4. The day I grew six feet.
5. Write a description of your landing on Mars.
6. If I could change the world.
7. What I would (might) find if I went to Mars.
8. Would you like to go to the moon?
9. What do you think it would be like to live on Mars?
10. My life as a butterfly.
11. What I can see from a cloud.
12. What happens when I put on my magic vest?
13. If I had a magic pencil at school.
14. If I could be anyone.
15. If I had a spaceship, I would....
16. I wish I could fly like a bird.
17. An imaginary trip anywhere.
18. If I were only one inch tall, I would....
19. If I could only relive yesterday.
20. If I were living long ago.
21. If I lived in a Christmas tree, I would....
22. If I could live in a different time period, what would I pick and how would life be different for me?
23. If I could drive a car, I would go....
24. If I could reach the sky, I would....
25. If I became invisible....
26. If I could be anything in the world, I would be....
27. If I could do what I wanted for one day, I would....
28. If I could have one wish....
29. If I had a reindeer, I would....
30. If I had three wishes....

31. If I had my very own town, I would....
32. If I had a baby dragon, I would....
33. If I could give any gift in the world, I would....
34. If the moon were mine, I would....
35. If I could change the world....
36. If I could, I would....
37. If I had a million dollars, I would....
38. If I found $100, I would....
39. If I had magical powers....
40. If I ran the school....
41. If I were in never-never land, I would....
42. If I were one of the first families to live on the moon, I would be like....
43. If I were a cloud.... (Describe your view of any state or country.)
44. If I came from another planet, my first impressions of the earth would be....
45. If I lived on the moon, I would tell the first U.S. President when he landed....
46. If I were the last person left on this earth, I would....
47. If I were a magician and could eliminate one thing, it would be.... (Explain.)
48. If I were invisible.... (Tell about where you would go and what you would do there.)
49. If I found a pair of wings — just my size — on the table when I came home from school tonight, I would....

Other People

1. Little people (who are no bigger than your thumb).
2. The witch who couldn't fly.
3. If I were a king (queen), I would....
4. If I could be _____ for a day.
5. What I would do if I were made the teacher tomorrow.
6. If I could be any character in a book, I'd be....
7. If I could be a famous person, I'd be....
8. If I were a pilgrim child, I would....
9. If I were a (cowboy, cowgirl, astronaut, football player)....
10. Daniel Boone as I knew him.
11. A day in the life of _____. (Fill in the blank with the name of a family member or close friend of the Abraham Lincoln family. You may wish to write on this topic after a visit to Lincoln's home. Have you visited the homes of any other famous families?)
12. What I think would have happened in history if Lincoln had not gone to the Ford Theater (or if Paul Revere's horse had fallen and broken its leg, etc.).
13. Can you guess my name? (Select a famous person. Write clues.)
14. Valley Forge, Pennsylvania. I was there, 1777.
15. I was born 100 years ago.
16. (Given the ability) I would change places with _____ for twenty-four hours.

17. When I am a parent, I will....
18. When I was an old prospector back in 1850, I....
19. I helped Betsy Ross.

Other Objects

1. If I could be a toy, I would be a _____ because....
2. If I could be an inanimate object, I would be....
3. If I were a tube of toothpaste, I would....
4. If I were a flagpole (on a sunny day; on a rainy, cold day)....
5. If I were a piece of chalk....
6. If I were a dragon....
7. If I were a bulletin board....
8. If I were a cardboard box....
9. If I were a Christmas tree....
10. If I were a star....
11. If I were a flower....
12. If I were a snowflake....
13. If I were a choir....
14. If I were the sun, I would....
15. If I were the moon, I would....
16. If I could be an animal, I would like to be a....
17. If I could be any animal, I'd be....
18. If I were an ice cream cone, I'd....
19. If a door could talk, I'm sure it would say....
20. If I were a raindrop, I would....
21. If I were a butterfly, where would I be right now?
22. Why I want to be a lion (any animal).
23. What I'd do if I were a raindrop.
24. My name is Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer.
25. My experiences as a lunch bucket.
26. My life as a sink stopper (or other).
27. What animal I would like to be — and why.
28. If I were a kite.
29. The giraffe's one wish.
30. Sam, the lonely shoe.
31. The little bee with no stinger.
32. If textbooks could talk.
33. If I were a large Christmas present.
34. If I were a football, I would....
35. If I were a bird, here is the song I would sing....
36. If I were a flower, I would....
37. If I were a mouse.
38. If I were a pet, I'd be....
39. If I were a duck.
40. If I were a goldfish, I would....
41. If I were a balloon, I would....
42. I just starred in a movie called....
43. If I were a candle at the Feast of Dedication....
44. I am a pumpkin (ghost, witch, cat).
45. I am a pumpkin on a doorstep.
46. I am a pumpkin in a field.

47. I am a tree (bell, gift, star).
48. I am a star on a tree.
49. I am a star in the sky.
50. I am a lazy kitten.
51. I am a letter of the alphabet.
52. If I were a pair of glasses, I would see....
53. If I were a cloud in the sky, I would....
54. If I were a purple turtle, I would....
55. If I were a speck of dust, I would....
56. If I were a school desk, I would....
57. If I were a piece of chalk, I would....
58. If I were an eraser, I would....
59. If I were a blackboard, I would....
60. If I were a television, I would....
61. If I were a snow tire, I would....
62. If I were a jingle bell, I would....
63. If I were a clumsy clown in the circus, I would....
64. Whatever happened to the Victrola?
65. What was a buggy whip? (An Edsel? A rug beater?)

Anything Goes

1. My mother (father) and I traded places for one day. You'll never guess what happened.
2. Pills were developed as a substitute for food (no restaurants but a chain of pill parlors).
3. If clouds had strings attached to them, what would happen?
4. What I would do if I knew I would be blind in three days.
5. What is a Zouch? (Obviously there is no such thing, experiment with the idea.)
6. Riding my polka-dotted butterfly....
7. Santa couldn't make it.
8. Slither, the snake.
9. The Blob that ate Chicago.
10. Hanukkah in Jerusalem.
11. Christmas on the moon.
12. The sixth continent.
13. How the zebra got his stripes.
14. How the giraffe got his long neck.
15. How sleep began.
16. The day the sun forgot to rise.
17. A money tree.
18. Suddenly the sun disappeared.
19. The magic door.
20. One day it rained cats and dogs.
21. The Wozzit.
22. Miss Piggy goes to the county fair.
23. What would happen if everyone told the truth.
24. The Wheezeit. (Any of Dr. Suess's books might help give you ideas for this topic.)
25. At the end of the rainbow, there is....
26. How does it feel to be...?
27. The day my pet learned to talk.

28. The day _____ followed me home from school.
29. What in the world!
30. The day the President came to my house.
31. The magic birthday cake.
32. My life as an inanimate object. (Write how this might feel. Example: doughnut, flag, wind, apple, leaf.)
33. If there was no wood in the world....
34. I bought a magic lollipop and....
35. Scuba diving in Florida.
36. The powers of the magical mystical mushroom.
37. The day the vacuum cleaner came to life.
38. Blue jeans and bubble gum.
39. Kittens and kites.
40. Bionic boys (girls).
41. Raining jelly beans.
42. Hamburger hideaway.
43. The Prince of the Spinach Can.
44. I opened the refrigerator, and there on the shelf sat a....
45. The day my mirror talked back to me.
46. The Purple Grape on skis.

Projection

1. "I Am a Snowflake." Think about rain, snow, etc. Then write on the beginning of a snowflake and a trip to earth. Here are a few sentences to start: "I fell asleep in a fluffy white cloud." "As a splishy, splashy raindrop, I had a good time." "Now I feel a change."
2. Pretend that you are hiding in a tree along the street watching boys and girls go down the street. From your vantage point in the tree take the sentence, "The boy or girl went home," and see dozens of different boys and girls as they go home. Write about these boys and girls. Some of these phrases may suggest a story: cows standing in the shade; mirrorlike the surface of the sea; high, terrifying scream; bees buzzing about the garden; turtles stretched out in the sun; strange, unusual footprints.
3. Pretend you are an astronaut engineer. A new planet has been discovered. You are to plan a city (or observatory). What things must you consider? What materials will you use?
4. You are the President. It is up to you to decide the future of our country's peace. How will you stop a war?
5. There is a horrible flood resulting from a hurricane off the coast of Florida (or wherever). You have a chance to be saved in a rescue lifeboat, but the officer tells you that you can take only one thing with you and you must decide instantly. What would you take along? Why? (Vary it and say you can only take one pet and you have several.)
6. Write anything about a chair that you can think of — poem or story form (i.e., if a chair could talk; chair of the future, etc.).
7. There is a little leprechaun sitting on our windowsill. Where did he come from? Where is he going? Why did he stop here? How is he dressed?

8. Pretend you are an ant. How does everything around you look from your vantage point?
9. Pretend you are an adventure storybook on a shelf in the library. No one ever draws you out. How do you feel?
10. "If You Were Ten Inches Tall" or "If You Were Ten Feet Tall." (In one class motivation started with measuring to ten feet on the wall and ten inches on a ruler and trying to "think" ourselves those sizes. Tremendous athletes evolved, spies secreted themselves on planes and solved world problems, mouse-like homes were fantasized, etc. One class painted an actual ten-foot tall man and ten-inch man to display with their writings.)
11. "A Trip through the Mind of a Grade School Boy/Girl." (Boys write about what girls think about and girls write about what is in a boy's mind.)
12. Try to think what would happen if: sleep was unnecessary, everyone was satisfied with things as they are, we never had to make decisions, all printing presses were destroyed, you lived on a planet with ten times as much gravity. (Use your imagination!)
13. Building your own theme. Imagine you are at the beach, in the woods, in the park, at a museum, or any other place where you have been. Jot down some of the things you could see, hear, smell, or touch. Be specific. Give details. Now weave these notes into a story. Throw out words or phrases you don't want to use.

Words as Ideas

List words or phrases that come to your mind when you think about several of the following words or phrases. Then select one group of your words to use in a story. All your words may not fit so discard whatever is not needed.

1. Poverty.
2. Fall.
3. Bugs (ants, insects).
4. Adults.
5. Loneliness.
6. Youth.
7. Age.
8. Fire.
9. Water.
10. Teeth.
11. Animals (peacocks, etc.).
12. Gossip.
13. Sewing.
14. Dust.
15. Dope.
16. Divorce.
17. Swimming.
18. Death.
19. Illness.
20. Mugging.
21. Football.
22. A blizzard.
23. Outward appearance.
24. So beautiful.
25. A mouse.
26. Strange music.
27. Broken window.
28. Tempting smell.
29. Rocky shore.
30. Faithful horse.
31. Stormy sea.
32. Abandoned mine.
33. Yelling crowd.
34. High fenced yard.
35. Smoke of a signal fire.
36. Singing arrow.
37. Mysterious box.
38. Squirrels scampering.
39. Character traits.
40. Weather notations.

41. Generation gap.
42. Man with balloons.
43. A bear in your camp.
44. A plane failing to gain altitude.
45. Mowing lawns.
46. Singing songs.
47. Playing games.
48. Going fishing.
49. Watching TV.
50. Plastic model cars.
51. Flowers turning to the sun.
52. Birds singing in the trees.
53. About my finger paints.
54. In a toy store.
55. Hot air balloon.
56. A fast motorcycle.
57. The prankster.
58. A mystery guest.

PLAY WRITING

Character Portrayal

1. Your favorite person in history comes to dinner at your home. What do you talk about as you're eating? Write the conversation in play format.
2. Write a play for your favorite character from a book.
3. Plan a panel of characters from books that you and your friends have read. Let each tell about his/her life. Later combine these remarks to form a short story. Each of you can write segments of the script.

Classroom Plays

1. Write a play about some incident in history. Add events to extend the historical event. When giving the play for the class, those of you who are acting may add additional lines.
2. Write a highly adventurous story using members of the class as the characters. Arrange as a play. You are encouraged to ad-lib.
3. Write a script for a school program.
4. Read an old folk tale. Change it into a play. Let the conversation carry the story plot.
5. Get a book of ballads from the library or music department. Arrange these for dramatization by arranging in play format with simple stage directions.
6. Write a radio play. In the script provide for an announcer, the station identification, and commercials. Get a copy of a script from a local radio station to serve as a model.

REPORTING

Lead Questions

1. What would you like to see invented? Why?
2. How many uses can you find for a bottle?
3. How do poets give human feelings to inanimate objects?
4. What makes a good class?
5. What does a good teacher do?
6. What do good students do?
7. How is our class good and how is it bad?

8. Why do you think you had to take the standardized test? Did it help you or hurt you?
9. What does your name mean?
10. What is happy?
11. What makes me happy?
12. What is success?
13. Who is Amy Carter?
14. What kind of friend am I?
15. What's so spooky about death?
16. What is your favorite subject?
17. Why do pupils cheat on tests?
18. What in the world bothers me?
19. What makes me sad?
20. What's the difference between liking and loving?
21. What does the teacher do when she's not in school?
22. Why does inflation worry some people?
23. What can I do to save our wildlife?
24. What are Eskimo schools like?
25. At what age do you think young people should start dating?
26. What do you think is the world's biggest problem?
27. What kind of car would you like to have?
28. Have you ever been discriminated against?
29. What kinds of discrimination are there besides racial discrimination?
30. Is discrimination ever right?
31. What do you think is the worst kind of discrimination?
32. Why hasn't a black man ever been President?
33. How would you solve the world's biggest problem?
34. How important to you is fitting in with a group.
35. What is the favorite sport of your group?
36. What singing group do you like best?
37. Which is more important, grades or clothes?
38. What qualities do you admire most in teenagers? Adults?
39. How old would the majority of the people in your group like to be?
40. Where would you most like to travel?
41. What is the hardest part about growing up?
42. Are men or women easier to get along with?
43. Are women or men the most understanding teachers?
44. How late do you think a student should be allowed to stay out on weekdays? On weekends?
45. Who are the best persons to talk to about your problems? (Friends? Parents? Teachers? Others?)
46. What invention do you consider to be the most important to our civilization?
47. How do you think a hostage feels?
48. Why is watching television a good or bad practice?
49. If you could rule the world, what would you do?
50. If you and your best friend were stuck in an elevator, what would you do?
51. You have only a few minutes warning of an approaching disaster. As you leave your room and start out the door, what would you most like to take with you?

Headlines

1. Teacher's faults.
2. My trip to the museum (bakery, etc.).
3. The world outside.
4. A happy (sad) day.
5. How dogs became tame.
6. My body, the wonderful human machine.
7. The meaning of friendship.
8. United States of America — the best place to live. (Or other points of view.)
9. Exploring outer space.
10. U.S. aid to underdeveloped countries.
11. The Fourth of July.
12. Playground make-believe.
13. Community needs.
14. Lengthening the span of human life.
15. Opening China to Western visitors.
16. Origin of (a national holiday).
17. The family's heritage and culture.
18. Civilization from start to finish.
19. Everyone speaks a dialect.
20. Body language communicates.
21. Memorial Day Parade.
22. How the geography of a state can affect you.
23. The ethnographic history of the state of _____.
24. The biggest problem in the U.S.A.
25. Education to meet the needs of a changing world.
26. Responsibilities of students to their family, school, and community.
27. The need for peace.
28. Future fun.
29. Less than big.
30. Slippery when wet.
31. Birthday parties.
32. Foreign foods.
33. A new kind of sport.

News

1. Write a weather report (humorous or serious).
2. Write a news report on something that has occurred in your building recently (speaker, film, sports event, etc.).
3. Write a news report on a field trip or other school activities outside the building.
4. Write about seasonal changes and weather phenomena. (The origin of such things as snowflakes, raindrops on a windowpane, etc.)
5. Write how you would move big animals to a new home in the zoo.
6. Write a feature story about a circus clown.
7. Interview a senior citizen near your school and then write a feature story.
8. Write a report on how to conserve soil, water, or energy.

Human Interest

1. Why I like TV or don't like it.
2. What I'm thankful for.
3. Why I love horses.
4. What I want to learn in English.
5. What I think of dating.
6. Why I like to hunt.
7. I like rainy days because....
8. I like gym day because....
9. I like being a girl (boy) because....

10. I like reading because....
11. I am glad to be an American because....
12. The kind of candy I like best is....
13. Here is how I would make a snowman....
14. At the library, we should....
15. At the circus, I like to see....
16. At the zoo, the animals I like best are....
17. The trouble with brothers (sisters) is....
18. The trouble with teachers is....
19. The team of the year I like best is....
20. Why grandmothers (grandfathers) are always nice.
21. When we are in school, we should....
22. What I like (dislike) about school.
23. My autobiography.
24. The advantages and disadvantages of being an only child.
25. The advantages and disadvantages of being an older brother (sister).
26. The advantages and disadvantages of being a younger brother (sister).
27. Why I admire G. W. Carver (can be used in study of any grade — with different heroes).
28. How the name of my school was selected.
29. Five things the majority of my group would do with a million dollars.
30. My favorite TV show. (Tell why.)
31. Ways to make money (wash cars, mow lawns, have a circus, make colored-sand rainbow bottles).
32. What I'm not thankful for on Thanksgiving.
33. The origin of the tradition of giving gifts at Christmas time.
34. Needs and wants for Christmas.
35. My little sister (brother) at dinner.
36. The last time I watched my friend do something wrong.
37. The world without sight.
38. The world without sound.
39. Feelings during a tornado watch.
40. The work of the school safety patrol.

MISCELLANEOUS

Practical Writing

1. How I get to school.
2. How to build a tree house.
3. Making a batch of cookies.
4. What I saw at the fire station (zoo, etc.).
5. Preparing for a class play.
6. How to wrap a gift.
7. Making my own Halloween mask.
8. Description of an animal, plant, tree, or flower.
9. Description of someone I know.
10. Funny hats to make.
11. Setting the dinner table for guests.
12. Getting mud off my good shoes.
13. How to polish shoes.
14. How to make paper valentines.

More on Imaginative Writing

1. You have walked across the rocks during low tide and discovered you cannot get back to the mainland. What would you do? What adventure is in store for you?
2. Invent an imaginary friend that comes to visit you. How do you entertain this friend? Does this friend eat with you? Is this person smaller than you are? Tell all about this special friend.

3. Describe a fictitious person and make the reader or listener like or dislike this person from your description.
4. Tell a story of an animal escaping from an enemy.
5. You woke up one morning and the world was all green. Explain your response.
6. You woke up and you were the only person anywhere in the world. What would you do?
7. The topic "If I Ran the Class for a Day" can provide you with an opportunity to say whatever you want. Some of your writing might include your reasons for assigning homework or punishing the class.
8. Write a story about an important message you found in a bottle on the shore of the Pacific Ocean.
9. You are going to the moon to live. You are allowed to take five of your most precious possessions. What would you take? Explain.
10. You have a chance to go to the moon to live. Would you go? Why or why not? Explain your reasons.
11. You are going to the moon to live. You may take two people with you. Whom would you choose? Explain your answer.
12. Describe a person in an action illustrating courage, laziness, anger, etc.
13. Write a story describing six improvements that might be made in the ordinary snow shovel.
14. Write an article describing a new toy you have invented to amuse children under ten years of age. Make the new toy sound attractive.
15. How will children your age spend a school day one hundred years from today? Write a description of how they will study, learn, recite, go to school, write, etc.
16. Cut construction paper in abstract shapes. Make your own picture from the shape and tell a story to go with it. You might make a mushroom with an elf under it, a horse's head, a lady's hat, or a clown's collar.
17. Select a picture from the picture file and write a story about the picture.
18. Invent a story or fairy tale based on a magazine picture.
19. Find a very large picture of a forbidding castle. Then think about these questions: (a) What has gone on within the walls? (b) What does it think about its age? (c) What happened one Halloween night? (d) How does it feel compared to new, modern buildings?
20. Think about the Ice Capades or circus. What act would you like to be in? Tell about it.
21. Look through magazines for pictures of characters that interest you. Cut out the characters and superimpose them on other magazine pictures that you have chosen as the setting. You could put a lion walking along a city street. Develop realistic or imaginary stories from these illustrations. Interesting stories sometimes result when sizes are disproportionate. Tell your story orally or write it down.
22. The world in which we are living is changing very fast. Many of the things that we use today were not even thought possible

twenty-five years ago. Many things that we use today will be old-fashioned twenty-five years from now. Imagine that you have a special magic power. This power makes you able to change anything you want to change in the world and the things that affect our lives. Write a story about the kind of a world that you would make. How would you change your life to make it different from the way it is now? Remember, you have the power to change *anything* about your life and the world in which you live.

23. Write a story using these three phrases: a twisted old tree, faint blue hills, tumble-down shacks.
24. Can you develop a story from one of these: (a) We never thought a stray puppy could cause so much trouble. (b) Teddy Bear sat at the table slurping his soup. (c) The rain dripped off Bump Rabbit's ears as he hopped off to school. (d) The hinge creaked behind me. (e) The old man and the girl walked slowly up the street.
25. Complete the unfinished story: "Into the dark cold he crawled for the third time, slowly and painfully. On he crawled to the end of the cave where the great world was lying very still. Was she really killed or was she just stunned? He wondered. Cautiously he held the torch nearer her nose. . . ."
26. Complete the unfinished story: "The king lay stretched in the warm sun on the east side of the cabin. At times he moaned and his legs jerked as he dreamed of rabbits racing through the tall grass. The princess eyed him from the corner, then hobbled over, squatted down, and playfully whacked the king on the nose with her wooden leg. . . ."
27. Find as many words as possible that relate to Christmas or another holiday. Put as many of these words as possible into a sentence or story about the holiday.

Personal Writing

1. Write the most exciting or amusing experience you have had in the past few months.
2. Express your own ideas on some subject in which you are interested — either in school or outside of school.
3. Keep a diary in which you relate the interesting experiences of each day and your reaction to them.
4. Choose a familiar sight and tell what it makes you think of.
5. Write an article about your favorite tastes or smells.
6. Write an article in which you present some ideas which would enable your school to save money.
7. Choose a familiar object that belongs to you but which you no longer want to keep. Write an advertisement for it.
8. It is near Thanksgiving. What does this holiday mean to you? How is it celebrated in your family? Why do many Americans think this is an important holiday? Do you think it will continue to be celebrated each year?
9. My dad (mom) is funny when. . . .
10. What happens when you play with your friends? Do you get your own way? How do you get along with others?

11. How would you like to spend a free day? What do you want very much to do? Have you ever done this before?
12. Tomorrow is your birthday. You will never be your age again. Write how it feels to be this age. What do parents mean to you? How do you feel about school? What do you like to do? What concerns you? Tell how you think and feel today.
13. Write a letter to a friend. Note the format of a friendly letter in a school textbook. Mail the letter when it is completed.
14. How have you had fun on Halloween?

Writing Commercials

Write radio or TV commercials for any of the following products.

1. Candy that is not sweet.
2. Bicycles with four wheels.
3. Cold drinks that are sour.
4. Book without pages.
5. Colorless crayons.
6. Soleless gym shoes.
7. Quiet whistles.
8. Noiseless drums.
9. Dripless ice cream cones.
10. A Halloween scarecrow.
11. An everlasting snowman.
12. Eatable candy wrappers.

Puzzles

1. Why do we eat?
2. What does a smile mean?
3. Why does a baby laugh?
4. What is laughter?
5. Where is yesterday?
6. Why does rain fall?
7. Where did the fog go?
8. Where do animals go when the snow falls?
9. How is a bottle of glue like a fire alarm?
10. What would happen if people forgot how to cry?
11. How big is big?
12. What if it never got dark?
13. How would you weigh an elephant?
14. Why are fire engines red?
15. Where does the darkness go when dawn comes?
16. Where is the foot of the rainbow?
17. Where do teachers go after school is out?
18. Why does tomorrow never come?
19. Why is time sometimes slow and sometimes fast?
20. Why do school buses look alike?

Beginning with a Title

1. Astronaut Antics.
2. Innerspaces.
3. Brains and Bullfrogs.
4. The Pizza That Had No Crust.
5. The Candy Bar That Lost Its Taste.
6. Hamburger Whamburger Land.
7. Dreaming of Coolness.
8. Concoctions.
9. Who Spilled the Glue?
10. Ugly and the Unicorn.
11. Slippin' an' Slidin'.
12. What Do They Do with *Tonsils?*
13. Tests with Tails.
14. Kites and Kidney Beans.
15. Think, Thank, and Thunk.
16. Popcorn Trees and Cookie Flowers.
17. Pretty Pink Pungent Petunias.
18. Diploducus Gets His Diploma.
19. Snicky Sneaks a Snack.
20. The Day Invaders Arrived.

Language Fun

1. Do a parody of a familiar poem.
2. Make up riddles about occupations (also jokes, etc.).
3. Make a three-sentenced spelling story.
4. Write a paragraph on some future occupation (stressing sentence structure, punctuation, etc.).
5. Write a thank-you note without using the words "thank you."
6. Write a story or state an argument based on the lyrics of a popular song picked by you.
7. Select a favorite word and tell why you like it.
8. Explain your choice of the funniest word you know.
9. Tell a story about the day a word changed your life.
10. Write a poem with words that rhyme with "delight."
11. Write a sentence to show differences in meaning between *pair* and *pear*. (Or choose other pairs such as *hymn* and *him; night* and *knight*, etc.)
12. Begin with "This is the rocket that _____ built." Write a verse using "This is the house that Jack built" as a model.
13. Explain where we got the word, *candy*. Look up history of word in dictionary or other reference books. (Other words to research can include *derrick, crown, ghost*, etc.)
14. Write each of these words on a separate sheet of paper or large poster: food, games, shelter, plants, animals, inventions, etc. Add specific words under the general terms, such as, potatoes, jumping rope, castle, etc.
15. Copy a long, involved sentence from a literature book. Write the shorter sentences that are embedded in the long sentence.
16. Write several short, simple sentences, then combine or embed these to form a single sentence.

III: PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS FOR THE TEACHER

MOTIVATIONAL TECHNIQUES

Poetry

1. One teacher reported a study of ballads turned his class on and opened the way for further study of poetry. Consult *Writing Aids through the Grades* by Ruth Kearney Carlson for background information, sources of ballads, and specific teaching suggestions.
2. Encourage pupils to bring poems from home to share with the class. Arrange some of those especially liked by pupils for choral speaking. Some poems might be suitable for pantomime.
3. Have pupils make up a list of descriptive words related to any topic or just free-lance words. These lists can first be brainstormed by the class and at later times prepared individually. The list can be used to find a subject or for writing a poem. Some words or phrases will find their way into the writing and others will be ignored.

4. Prepare greeting cards for special days. Let pupils write appropriate messages or verses.
5. Select a word; for example, *trees*. Have pupils write descriptive words beginning with each letter. Then let them select words and write sentences or create a poem.

   T — Tall, timber, towering.
   R — Redwood, relaxing, resin.
   E — Energy.
   E — Earthbound.
   S — Shade.

6. Let pupils list adjectives in a story or poem you have read aloud. Write these on chalkboard. Then have pupils compose their own stories and poems, or draw pictures.
7. Give the pupils five minutes to list on a piece of paper all the uses they can think of for a brick.
8. Find a funny verse and bring to class. Read it well orally. Then let pupils find other humorous poems in poetry books you brought to class from the library. Let pupils read these aloud.
9. Read haiku poetry and discuss the format. Write a haiku together.
10. Discuss alliteration. Have pupils write a story with as many words as possible starting with the same sound, i.e., "The daring dog darted down the driveway into the dark and dreadful subway."
11. Discuss trite similes (as bright as a silver dollar). Encourage pupils to create new space-age similes. "The lad was as bright as a laser beam." Use this as a story title to describe all the bright actions that justify use of this title.
12. Read and study a poem. Discuss poetry and figurative language — specifically similes. Rewrite the ideas expressed in the poem in prose.
13. Discuss similes, conversation, alliteration. Have pupils write a story about an animal using similes, alliteration, and conversation.
14. After a study of rhyming words, punctuation, and style of simple poems (especially about holidays or seasons), let pupils write original poems.
15. Explain the limerick pattern: five lines; rhyme scheme: a,a,b,b,a.

    I wish that my room had a floor,
    I don't care so much for a door,
    But this walking around
    Without touching the ground
    Is getting to be quite a bore.

    See *Pen, Paper and Poem* by David McCord for introducing the couplet, quotation, limerick, clerihew, haiku, cinquain, tercet, or triolet.
16. One teacher's most successful writing lesson sprang from the introduction of the adjective. The class talked about the adjective as that part of speech which helps to paint a picture with words — the kinds of words which usually help us to see, feel, hear, smell, or taste more precisely.

17. A description of predesigned verse forms (couplets, haike, diamante, or limericks) is explained in *Poetic Composition through the Grades* by Robert A. Walsch. The book contains many examples of writing by elementary pupils.
18. Read poems containing similes or let pupils read poems aloud that describe the seasons. Note the description. Help pupils write their own descriptions using "like" or "as."
19. Explain personification by having children bring in the picture of an object and then pretend he/she is one of the objects. You might have such topics as: "The Mirror and Things," "Best Dress in the Closet," "What My Shoelace Thinks of Me," or "Hats I Have Known." Or you can use objects that are closely associated with famous persons and write about them in the first person: "I Was Queen Isabella's Jewel Case" or "What It Was Like to Be Abe Lincoln's Ax." Two children can create a dialogue between inanimate objects that have been onlookers at some exciting or dramatic event — the quill pen and the sand shaker that witnessed and participated in the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

Words

1. Take the basic spelling list several times during the year and arrange words into categories. Let pupils refer to this list as they write. Encourage pupils to add their own words.
2. Make a list of unusual words. Let pupils select an unknown word and define it any way they like and write a story using that word. For fun, let pupils look up the word in the dictionary before reading the paragraphs to the class.
3. Pair words that have similar meanings such as *groundhog* and *woodchuck, store* and *shop*. Compile a varied list and let pupils select their own "partner words" and write about their own or imaginary experiences. If the lesson is to be structured further, the teacher may ask the differences within the "partner words," such as *artist* and *illustrator*, or *company* and *visitors*.
4. Concepts of *big* and *small, high* and *low, fat* and *skinny* should be thought of in terms of comparison. The class can compile a list of nouns that are different sizes. When the writing begins, comparisons are drawn with the objects listed. Example, "I saw a slide that was as tall as an elephant. The elephant is fatter though!"
5. Have pupils look in the dictionary for the many meanings of *run, fall, line,* or *hand*. They can then write sentences using these words to illustrate various meanings.
6. On the chalkboard prepare with the help of the pupils lists of words associated with various occupations. (Electricians: wire, socket, outlet, switch, etc.) Let pupils write sentences using these words to describe the various kinds of work after selecting the occupation they are interested in. Encourage pupils to ask at home for additional words.
7. When pupils were writing, one teacher walked around the room and spelled any word requested by pupils. The teacher wrote

words on bits of scrap paper. Pupils left a short or long space for words to be filled in later on their papers. Sometimes pupils started the word using the initial letters.

Literature

1. In class let pupils choose some city or county they would like to visit. Encourage them to read all types of literature about this place. For example, a story, folk tale, or novel about China, a recipe book that describes cooking in China, a history book about China's past empires, a book of Chinese poetry, or perhaps a factual account of life in present-day China. Look for different types of literature. Then have pupils write a brief summary or description of the city or country selected. Such an assignment discourages direct copying or writing of unrelated sentences.
2. The pupils write a story they have read from a point of view different from that used in the original story.
3. Read a folk tale which explains how something came to be. Then have the children write their own explanation of how something else came about.
4. Read a conversation from a story or a play. Have the pupils write a story around the conversation.
5. Read or review a tall tale. Discuss what makes a tale tall. Have the pupils write their own tall tales.
6. Read a myth to class. Discuss why it is a myth. Have the class write myths, e.g., why pigs have curly tails, why rabbits hop, etc.
7. After reading folk tales and fables, the children could create an imaginative story using the literature as a guide or model.
8. Read an exciting short story to the class. Just before reaching the climax, stop and ask them to write their own endings for the story. Encourage pupils to utilize clues given in the story which point toward the ending. Avoid adding extraneous information. Compare and contrast similarities and differences in endings.
9. Have the children choose one person from their literature or from real life whom they would like to be. Write a story with this person as the central character.
10. After the class has read a story, pupils could write about one particular character and how they felt about that character. Have pupils cite things the person did or said to have created this type of reader response.
11. Read the first part of a story — such as the setting — and have the pupils write the action, climax, anticlimax, etc.
12. Help pupils understand the various plot motifs in folk tales which can be used when creating their own stories. These could include the journey into the outside world, journey into the world with a confrontation with a monster (weather, personal trait, evil, an enemy, etc.), and being overcome by the monster or returning to a safe, secure home. For more details, see *New Directions in Elementary English* by Alexander Frazier published by the National Council of Teachers of English.

13. Complete this story: "The night was still, broken only by the shrill screeches of a distant owl. The black, narrow house looked forbidding in the pale moonlight. The leaves which were still on the trees made rustling sounds as a faint breeze blew them. . . ."
14. The beginning of a oral story is given in which an old and faithful sled overhears his owner telling, with glee, that he is getting a new sled for Christmas. The sled is telling how he feels about this. The unfinished story, dramatically told, stops after a remark such as "but on Christmas morning". . . .
15. Read "The Lady or the Tiger" by Frank Stockton and have the pupils discuss it and write possible endings to it.
16. Since Vachel Lindsay's birthday and the anniversary of John F. Kennedy's death are so close, one class studied Lindsay's poem "Abraham Lincoln Walks at Midnight." Then the pupils wrote analogies about John F. Kennedy. A fringe benefit was learning the term "analogy."
17. From Ruth Krauss' book, *How to Make an Earthquake,* one teacher came up with several ideas she used during her student teaching experience. For motivation, she read several passages and then posed one of the questions given in the book. She put this topic on a ditto, drew a picture to coincide with the topic (for the pupils to color at their option in case they finished earlier) and left ample space for writing. Some specific suggestions are (a) "How to Balance a Peanut on Your Nose," (b) "The Best Way to Eat Peas," and (c) "How to Make 'Mish-Mosh.'"
18. Use Charlie Brown books — *Love Is . . .* or *A Friend Is. . . .* Show parts of the book on the opaque projector. Let children write their interpretation of what love is or what a friend is. Have children illustrate their stories. Show pictures and share feelings with others in the class.
19. Read chapters from *Mrs. Piggle Wiggle* by Betty McDonald to the pupils. (Each chapter tells how Mrs. Piggle Wiggle cures some bad habit of the children in the neighborhood.) Let pupils write a Mrs. Piggle Wiggle story telling how this quaint lady might solve one of their personal problems.
20. "I Was Freed by Harriett Tubman." This assignment might follow the reading of *Freedom Train* by Dorothy Sterling, which gives the account of the runaway slave who became a Moses to her people. The book could be read orally to the class.
21. After reading Fabre's *Selections in Science,* have the pupils explain the good and bad points of a germ-free world.
22. Discuss Greek gods. Talk about the most famous ones. Show pictures in *Encyclopaedia Britannica, Jr.* Read *The Boy Who Flew Too Close to the Sun.*
23. After reading a pirate story, let the children pretend to be a mouse hiding in a pirate ship or a fair maiden captured by the pirates and write their observations of the pirates' actions. Robert Lawson's *Captain Kidd's Cat,* Stevenson's *Treasure Island,* Howard Pyle's *Book of Pirates* can supply information.
24. Talk about storybook or historical characters and episodes in the story or in the character's life. Let pupils write additional

imaginary events. Some characters could be Gulliver, Christopher Columbus, Paul Bunyan, or Daniel Boone.

25. Read orally in class *The Phantom Tollbooth* by Norton Juster. Note the play on words. Use as a model to create a fantasy world and write similar episodes.
26. Let pupils pick a favorite fictional character such as Tom Sawyer, Casey at the Bat, Caddie Woodlawn, Cinderella, Alice in Wonderland, Rumpelstiltskin, Snow White, Donald Duck, etc., and write about a personal adventure with one of these characters. Encourage writing of dialog.
27. Help pupils to write a conversation between two characters from fiction (fairy tale characters and persons from books they have read).
28. Read several fables noting the moral and the single trait given the main character. Also note there is only one event or happening. Write a fable together with pupils in class having two characters who speak to each other.
29. Recall with the pupils a book you recently read aloud to the class and let them write a new ending to the story or book.
30. Encourage pupils to write a letter to an author explaining why they like the book. Pupils should not expect a reply.
31. Secure book jackets from the library. Pupils write their own "books" using available information. Pupils later read the original story.

Games

1. Write a round-robin story together in class in which each child in turn adds a new sentence to the story.
2. One teacher has a theme that has been quite successful — "My Original Holiday." The child make up a holiday, chooses a specific date for his holiday, and describes what the day consists of, historic background, and means of celebration.
3. Put three objects in a title that are not normally connected, such as "The Lion, the Rose, and the Star"; "The Feather, the Clock, and the Doughnut." Or, put three objects in a box, such as an aspirin, nail, and a key, and ask the class to write themes using all three in some way.
4. Take two story characters from different stories and use them in the same story. Example: Amos from *Ben and Me* and *Stuart Little*. Begin by making a list of story characters suggested by pupils.
5. Have the students choose an object. They are to write a story as told by this object as to how it came to exist in its present state or surroundings.
6. Ask the class to suggest twelve or fifteen words at random. Write these on the board, and from this list the class tries to make up sentences (a means to stimulate the children's imaginations). For example, they suggest the words: cave, robbers, loot, train, detectives. Using these words they make up several sentences such as: (a) The train robbers hid their loot in a cave; (b) The loot from the train robbery was worth several

thousand dollars. From here they go on to write a paragraph or two.

7. Help pupils to write modern versions of stories they have read in class, using characters, settings, and situations similar to the ones in the original story. Sometimes the teacher may wish to write a beginning sentence on the board such as: It was a dark and stormy....
8. Provide beginning and ending sentences of a story and ask the pupils to fill the middle.
9. Have pupils close their eyes and imagine what a "grinch" would look like. Is it an animal or something from outer space? Allow them thinking time before writing a theme entitled "The Day I Bumped into the Grinch." As a follow-up activity, ask them to draw a picture about their story.
10. A "starter" word (the more unusual and fun-sounding the better) is given to the children. It is not defined or discussed. Let the children be as creative and imaginative as they can be — no penalty for a wrong definition; in fact, they are encouraged to invent definitions! After the stories are written and read to the group, the actual definition is discussed. One teacher wrote that it was fun to see how different the definitions were, and he thought the real definitions would be remembered with more clarity because of the "way out" definitions written in class. In this case *Polygraph* was used as the starter word. The lesson which followed stressed the use of prefix *poly* and the children discussed other words containing this same prefix: polygon, polyhedron, polygamy, etc.
11. Play the game, I Pack My Trunk (and in it I put), with your class. Instead of putting things in a trunk, put together a story. Start it out for the children; have each child add an idea.
12. One teacher chose six titles for creative stories and put them in envelopes. The children were divided into six groups so that each group would work together on one title. Every child was given a piece of writing paper and drawing paper. She gave the envelopes to one of the children in each group. After reading the title, the first person wrote for five minutes, then passed it to the next person, who read it and added on to it for five minutes and then it was passed on until all children had helped compose the story. In the meantime the children who were not writing were drawing illustrations. At the end the children put their "book" together and presented it to the class.
13. One teacher works with pictures. She cuts out several assorted pictures from magazines. The class discusses appropriate titles for the pictures and tries to think about a story for each one. She likes to give each child a different picture, so there will be no repetition of the story line.
14. At Thanksgiving time, use the alphabet for children to list things for which they are grateful, i.e., (a) airplanes, the alphabet; (b) books, baskets; (c) churches, candy.

Bulletin Boards

1. After reading a short story, direct pupils to make creative posters using words instead of pictures to convey their feelings about the story that they read. Posters can be displayed on the bulletin board.
2. Help children develop a story from a picture or pictures displayed on the bulletin board. The teacher will post two or three from which to select.
3. Here are four ways to display student writing: (a) On The Trail of Good Stories — cut an Indian figure and footprints from construction paper. Have the Indian follow footprints to the stories, each mounted on construction paper along the trail. (b) Stories with the Seal of Approval — draw several seals balancing balls on their noses; mount stories on balls. (c) Drum up Good Stories — e.g., revolutionary drummer boy; mount stories on the drums. (d) Stories that Pass Inspection — cut out a soldier and several soldier hats; mount stories on hats.
4. Put pictures of several famous people on the bulletin board. Ask students to choose the picture of one person and describe it so that when their story is read to the class, their peers can identify which person is being described from the story written.
5. Prepare a sample poster illustrating the many definitions of ***hand, line,*** or ***run.*** (A hand of cards, a person's hand, or a horse being so many hands tall.) Let pupils look through dictionary to find other words with many meanings and write brief definitions for many of these. Pupils can then decide which word(s) can be more easily illustrated by drawing, collage, or three-dimensional designs.

Props

1. Have children bring three real objects to school in a paper bag. They can trade paper bags and create stories around the objects found inside.
2. Blindfolded, the child selects one of the articles from a box of items to feel (e.g., Halloween mask with eye holes covered). Change the articles frequently.
3. Wrap up, individually, articles such as a penny, a piece of velvet, a string, etc., and have the children choose a package and write about how they would feel if they were that object.
4. Choose one of the two or three pictures displayed on the bulletin board and have pupils describe what they see in it.
5. Have children bring an object to class and have them write a story using the object as the central idea.
6. Some props one teacher has used to inspire creative writing: (a) a mysterious sound inside an unusual shaped box, (b) a gift-wrapped box, (c) a portion of an interesting picture taken from a magazine, (d) a stuffed animal, (e) a stuffed giraffe [describe how it got its spots or its long neck], (f) a toy mouse and elephant [how does one view the other?], (g) start a mystery story and stop just when the action begins, (h) chil-

dren sit in circle with eyes closed, pass a tray with different textured objects or food, then describe how it feels, (k) discuss with children what "turns them on"; then write about what "turns them off."

7. Show different kinds of bubble gum (bought in a store). Have motivating discussion with the children giving their peculiar incidents with bubble gum. Have children write an imaginary story of "How Bubble Gum Saved Me from. . . ."
8. Write a round-robin story in which each pupil adds a sentence to the story.
9. Nearly every family has a favorite family story that they like to remember or that is passed down. Have pupils ask or listen at home for these stories to share in class. These may be told orally or written. Some stories that were told in one class were Grandfather's experiences during the dust storms in Kansas and the time the family had to sleep all night in the car because all the motels were full.
10. Show an art picture to the class. Portraits of people by famous artists can be used. Have the children write a paragraph about the kind of person they think the person may have been. What can they see in the face that may give them clues to his personality?
11. Bring different types of bottles to class. Have children find as many uses for bottles as possible. List these.
12. Provide children with several notebook hole reinforcements to incorporate into a picture and then write a story about it. With one group, results included race cars, trains, the galaxy, rockets, animal eyes.
13. Observe a given pet and then have the children write about it and draw it. Arrange for proper care of pet in the classroom.
14. Show a picture of an animal. Have pupils write what the animal would say if it could talk.
15. Show a picture, but cover up most of it, allowing only an unusual part to show, i.e., pizza, etc. Have pupils describe what they think this is.
16. Show a picture of some object or even the object itself. Have the students write a theme of imagination about it as they might each see it. Discuss point-of-view.
17. Give pupils mirrors to observe themselves. Then have them describe or write what they see.
18. Show a short movie or filmstrip without the sound. Ask the pupils to make up their own version of what is happening.
19. Assist pupils to find their own topic by following these directions. "On scrap paper write words or phrases that come to your mind. Don't worry about spelling. Just write phrases as they come into your thinking. When the page is nearly full, select one or two to serve as a title or to begin your composition. Use any phrases you wish as you go on with your writing. Forget about the words and phrases that don't fit."
20. Save old greeting cards. Cut away names or messages. Let pupils select cards on which to write short verses or messages. Cards can be cut into fancy shapes and verses recorded before hanging on a branch to make a Poetry Tree or mobile.

21. Demonstrate for pupils how to write A.B.C. sentences. *A*ll *b*ig *c*ats *d*aintily *e*at *f*rom *g*reat *h*assocks.
22. One teacher has three or four sets of wordless pictures gleaned from advertisements put out by book companies for beginning primary grades. She pastes the pictures on colored construction paper in such a way that they form a sequence of events — much like a cartoon strip without words. Thus, the plot of a story evolves through pictures. Pupils can write the story told by the pictures. Either description or conversation can be stressed.

Projects

1. Prepare a class dictionary of writing or composition terms, such as *manuscript, editing, pseudonym, cliche,* etc. Add to the dictionary throughout the year.
2. Pupils, working in committees, build a three-dimensional scarecrow using real straw. Pupils write the adventures of the scarecrow.
3. Using pliable chicken wire as a base, shape a large bear — broad enough for young children to stand or crawl inside. Tear brown tissue paper for pupils to cover the wire frame. Let pupils crawl inside and talk for the bear. Pupils' compositions can be "read" by the bear.
4. With large, round tubes create a tall rocket with a capsule at the base large enough to contain a small chair. Pupils can sit "inside" the capsule and write stories.
5. Have older children write a book or story (with a controlled vocabulary) for first graders. Permit the use of a few extra words.
6. Have upper-grade children write a primer for primary children to read. If it can be arranged, have the "author" work with the younger pupils in preparing and reading the story.
7. Have the children construct papier-mache animals and paint them in colorful polka dots and other interesting designs. Have the children make up unusual names and print name tags. Display the tagged animals on a table. Have children select two or three of the animals as characters for an original story.
8. After going to a bakery, have the children write or dictate (and possibly draw) about their experiences.
9. Have children write their own story and illustrate it using adding machine tape. Have them draw a progression of pictures, showing successive action, then write their own captions. These pictures do not have to have the subtle humor of regular comics even though they appear to be comics.
10. Take a field trip around the school yard. Upon returning, ask the children to describe something they each saw that they think no one else noticed.
11. Ask children to keep a diary for a week as if it were written by a person their own age as they traveled in the early 1800's from the East to Illinois (or any other state).
12. Have the children keep an imaginary diary for a week. They are to use their imaginations and write about out-of-the-ordinary events while making them sound like usual happenings.

13. Ask the pupils to illustrate and write a story about their favorite Mother Goose tale, i.e., "Three Bears," "Three Little Pigs," etc. The material is familiar and they do not feel put upon to "make-up" something they do not know about.
14. Have pupils observe family members for several days. Write about one, including habits, interests, likes, dislikes. Later they can make a family album or family tree.
15. Instruct each child to draw a picture with colored crayon on the upper part of a sheet of paper. Exchange. Using these pictures have children write a story remembering: (a) something must happen, (b) it must happen in sequence, (c) it should have a punch line.
16. When someone is ill in the group, have each class member write a letter to cheer him/her up. Each may write things that are outlandish to get a laugh from the person that is ill. The letters need not be read and corrected by the teacher. All letters are sent to the ill child.
17. Have a contest to see who can write the scariest ghost story. Discuss words that make a scary story. Write them on the blackboard. Read a scary story to children (e.g., "The Pit and the Pendulum"). After the stories are written, they can be either acted out or read orally (with dramatic expression). Discuss what makes a story scary. Does the age of the reader affect the scariness of the story? What type of stories do young children like? Older children? Teen-agers? Adults?
18. Ask children about their favorite colors, why they like them, and what they remind them of. Then once motivated, have the children write about this color, draw a picture of something representative of the color, and mount it on a piece of paper that color. See *Hailstones and Halibut Bones* by Mary O'Neill.
19. Make a facsimile bus, railroad, or plane tickets for each member of the class. Have the pupils print their destinations on them — then write what they see from the window of the bus, railroad, or plane.
20. Make a rebus on chalkboard. This is best as a group activity the first time.
21. Give each child about eight feet of soft wire that can be easily bent and easily cut. Ask them to use the wire to make a useful object that no one has ever made before. Have the children do the following: (a) The following day have the children write a paragraph describing a machine that could be used to mass-produce their inventions. (b) The following day have the children imagine that their inventions are to be put on the market. Ask them to describe their inventions and write the instructions that would have to go in a box. (c) Another day the children can write an ad for their invention.
22. Prepare a large book of heavy brown wrapping paper to display writing papers or stories written and enjoyed by the class.
23. Pupils can write their own words to a favorite comic book. They can use all or part of the comic book.
24. Help committees to write a short story on long, thin strips of paper. Then roll them on a tape dispenser or paper towel tube and unravel the story as it is read.

25. Have lots of magazines in the room, along with glue, colored paper, and other miscellaneous items. Let the pupils cut out interesting pictures and do what they want, such as: (1) Place the cutout on paper and draw a picture that makes the cutout part of the picture. (2) Make a story booklet, using pictures from a magazine, rather than a drawing. (3) Put a picture at the beginning of a booklet and write a story of any length about the picture. (4) Make a folder about one single subject. Cut out pictures from magazines relating to the subject such as toys, girls, etc., and then write something at the completion of the folder.
26. Show pupils how to fold a large piece of paper into four parts. In the first section have them draw a picture of a person or animal that can be the main character in their stories. On the second part, have them sketch briefly what this person or animal likes to do. In the third section they can draw a picture to show what happened when the action in the second picture got started. This is the climax of the story. Now let them tell how the story ended in the last picture. They can write captions for each picture.
27. Select with the pupils a topic (loneliness, storms, fire, horses, ships, trains, etc.) all would enjoy. Locate books, poems, articles, newspaper clippings, or pictures related to the topic. Build a classroom display. Also read myths, legends, stories, or plays which add to the understanding of the topic. Then help class members decide what they want to tell about the topics and select that form of literature which is appropriate for their ideas — the tall tale, an essay, an historical overview, an imaginary tale, a realistic description, or a form of poetry. Let pupils write and rewrite until they are satisfied. Add these to the display.

Discussion

1. Select any holiday and write as many words as possible associated with it. Write words on board. Let pupils use these to write sentences or stories. Record the words on heavy paper covered with contact paper and file for future use by pupils in the writing corner for free-writing experiences.
2. The children could be motivated to write about something that bothers them, such as their pet peeve.
3. On the first autumn-like day, have the children talk about and write about their favorite aspects of fall.
4. Give the children the topic, "I Am Not Me Today." They can be another person or object. They are to tell about their life as another person or object.
5. On a rainy day discuss the weather and have the children write what the rain reminds them of.
6. On the first winter day, have the children discuss and write about their favorite winter sport.
7. After something out of the ordinary happens in your classroom, ask the children to write a factual report of what transpired.

Reading the compositions aloud will demonstrate how differently people view the same event.

8. For Halloween begin a short story with four or five sentences and have the children finish it. One story might be going to a haunted house while trick-or-treating; have the children write about what happens.
9. What does it mean to be "lost" in books? in TV? Invite children to tell of their experiences — happy, sad, excited, frightened.
10. Put a large symbol, such as an L, an X, or a circle, on the board. Discuss what it makes each child think of. Mention international driving signs. Then ask the children to think of some other symbols and write about them.
11. Discuss games played during recess. Note sequence of each. Put notes on chalkboard. Let pupils write directions for playing the game.
12. Have pupils discuss occupations of parents and other adults; list occupations on blackboard.
13. For winter — begin by asking children how they would feel if they were nothing — zero — then show a snowman and talk about it. Have them write how they would feel if they were at first nothing, then slowly became a snowman, and how they would feel and what they would think while they were melting. Refer to "The Snowman" by Raymond Briggs.
14. Discuss briefly with the students the aim of expository writing and how it differs from description and narration. Expository writing answers such questions as "How?" "Why?" and "How do you know?" Present the following ideas to the students and have them choose the one they wish to write about: (a) Imagine you are Sherlock Holmes and you have received a threatening letter while working on a murder case. Write a paragraph telling why you might have received this letter. (b) Imagine the U.S. map was at the North Pole, or at the Equator. What major changes would take place? Explain. (c) Imagine that Robin Hood lived in the year 2000 A.D. Explain some of the unusual circumstances with which he would be faced.
15. Ask the class this question, "Should all books be replaced by something?" When students state their opinions, "Why?" may be asked. Present these questions to the students: (a) Should houses be made completely of glass? (b) Should pianos talk? (c) Should squares be round? (d) Should horses be tiny as poodles? (e) Should the earth be flat? The students may choose any one of these for their composition. Then ask them to vote pro or con on all issues except the one they have chosen to write about. Keep a record of this vote. After all compositions have been read to the class, take another vote to see how convincing their writing was.
16. Encourage pupils to think in terms of various senses — sight, touch, hearing, smell, and taste. Select specific objects (a shovel, for example); have each person list words describing the object visually — blue, fuzzy, thick, etc. Then touch — soft, smooth, warm, etc. Do for all senses (good for descriptive

word development). Ideas for objects to describe: flower, tree, classroom, boy, box, table, spaghetti.

17. Have them list senses in order of importance to them. Ask: "What would be the disadvantages if you did not have a particular sense? What advantages (as the sound of a dentist's drill)?" Discuss pleasure sensations.
18. Have class write short descriptions of sense experiences they remember as having the strongest impact on them: "The Most Amazing Sight..."; "The Most Beautiful Sound..."; "The Most Terrifying Touch..."; "The Most Potent Smell I Ever Experienced."
19. Help pupils become aware of their senses. Talk about the uses of the senses: (a) the smell of things — perfume, paste, old books, earth; (b) the taste of things — toothpaste, jelly; (c) the sound of things — biting into an apple, the buzz of the saw. Let pupils describe one of the following so vividly that a visitor from another planet could recognize it at once: a tomato, ice cream, shoelace, piece of toast, doorknob, bottle of ink, book cover, orange squeezer, baseball, pencil.
20. Experiment with a skeleton story. "Once upon a time, there were _____ and _____. They lived in a _____ where they _____. One day, as they were _____ along the _____, they _____, etc."
21. Have your class or writing group select a topic. This could be snow, floods, sports, city life, or animals. Discuss orally ideas, places, people, or events related to your topic. Then have each one select a topic discussed and write about it. See if any of them can plan a myth, legend, fable, tall tale, imaginary story, factual story, or poem around the topic. After they have written the compositions, have pupils share them with other group members and talk about what was written. Then have pupils rewrite and add ideas that were discussed or suggested.
22. List a series of proverbs on the chalkboard. Some might be: a stitch in time saves nine, the grass is greener on the other side of the fence, a penny saved is a penny earned, the early bird gets the worm, and an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Discuss the surface and deeper meanings. Discuss a story plot to illustrate deeper meaning. Write the story on the board as children dictate. Later let children form committees and write small group stories. Children can share being the secretary. Let groups read stories to each other. No need to grade or comment further on stories. The oral sharing completes the writing activity.
23. Use the following as a basis for class discussion: "You volunteer to stay all winter at a deserted day camp to look after things. What will you take with you? What types of clothing will you need? How will you keep warm? Where will you get food? What plans will you make to survive in a lonely spot?" Let pupils start to write as they become involved and have ideas to put on paper. Continue discussion with pupils who need more background and knowledge. Finally, you or a capable student can serve as scribe or secretary for the last one or two who find handwriting a laborious task.

Media

1. Children love invisible messages. Let them experiment with lemon juice and a toothpick. Have them hold the writing, when dry, over a large light bulb or hot radiator. The writing will turn brown and be easily read.
2. Give each pupil a duplicating or spirit sheet on which to draw a picture and caption or write a story. Combine to make a class booklet to share with parents. Let pupils explore and discover; don't aim for a perfect production.
3. Duplicate stories written by pupils to form a class magazine. Using a hectograph is an inexpensive method for making multiple copies. Let pupils select any draft of their writing from their composition folder and go through the editing process to get a copy which is worthy of distribution.
4. Find pictures in magazines. These may be pictures of a person, a group of people, a situation, or a happening. Mount each picture (best to have fairly large pictures) on a sheet of twelve-inch by eighteen-inch construction paper, leaving space at the side or bottom. Using a felt-tip marker, print a provocative comment or question beside or beneath the picture. Examples: (1) Why might this person be angry? Is his anger justified? (2) What is wrong here? (3) The man in the center is causing others to react. In what way? Pictures may be exchanged to produce varied reactions.
5. Bring lyrics of current songs or ballads to class. The pupils can then either write a story or state an argument based on the lyrics of the song they picked.
6. Play a record. Ask children to write the images the music evoked.
7. Let them hear a particular piece of music, then have the children draw whatever the music makes them think of. They can then move into creative writing.
8. Use the record, *1812 Overture,* by Tchaikowsky. Ask the children to listen to the last part of the record (battle scene). As they listen, they should write down phrases that come to mind. Play the music two or three times. Ask children to combine their thoughts into one story. Discuss the important elements of a story (place, time, action, characters, etc.). Have volunteers read their stories.
9. Play the record, *Wind Is a Cat.* Have them close their eyes and sway to the wind or interpret the wind in pantomime as the record plays. Discuss metaphor, simile, and other devices of figurative language.
10. Show a short movie of a story to lower or primary grades, but do *not* turn on the sound ("Ugly Duckling," "Skipper Learns a Lesson," "Corky the Crow," "Adventures of a Young Eagle"). Ask pupils to write the story of the movie. The stories can turn out to be surprisingly different from each other. This is even more effective if a film such as *Our Wonderful Body: How It Moves* is shown. The variations in the stories usually are quite hilarious.

11. During Halloween week play a record with eerie voices, sounds, or effects as the pupils write. Pupils appreciate the opportunity to include horror and gory ideas.
12. Plan ahead for everyone to watch the same TV program. Analyze it later in class. Discuss how the same story can be different as a TV production, drama, or book.
13. Have the children write about what they would do if they were alone on the particular heavenly body when a space project was directed to that planet.
14. When talking about people in the news, have the children write about a person they would like to be.
15. Bring in newspaper cartoons and caricatures of the President. Discuss the definition of *caricature*.
16. Make a large collage picture from magazine clippings, building it around a theme that establishes a mood (sadness, joy, loneliness, sports, etc.). Superimpose each title in bright colors on top of the pictures. After several more are constructed by pupils, let them select one and write about that theme.
17. Have pupils tape-record stories. Then listen to the tape as they write it. Editing can be done during the first writing while listening and relistening to the tape.
18. Let children create their own alphabet book. Words which catch their fancy can be inserted from time to time. This helps pupils to notice new words as they read or study.
19. Go through old magazines and tear out attractive color pictures. Cut and mount on heavy paper. On the back side write a series of questions about the picture. Let other pupils use these pictures and questions to find something to write about.
20. Have pupils look through newspapers and magazines for stories about dogs, other pets, or items that interest them. They can collect pictures and use these to talk about their subject.
21. To stimulate imaginative thinking one teacher successfully used advertisements, usually in color, to suggest original written works. The item was cut out so that no lettering would appear on the picture to be pasted on the tagboard. All of the tagboards were nine inches by twelve inches regardless of the size of the picture, with more items than there were class members. Let pupils write their own advertising copy.
22. One teacher has a large collection of pictures. From this picture file, pupils can select a picture. They look at a picture and study it carefully. Who is involved? What is going on in the picture? What do you think is going to happen? How will the story end? Will there be a "happy" ending? These pictures are left in the writing corner for independent student writing.

File Fun

1. Children are intrigued with big words. So don't overlook "supercalifragilisticexpialidocus." They also delight in scientific, tiny, or funny sounding words. Encourage pupils to keep a small, card file box with words written on cards and organized in some fashion. Create a positive interest in new words.

2. During the year collect papers which are basically definitions. (Example: Sleet is..., loneliness is..., or love is....) Combine these to form a Book of Definitions. Combine some definitions to form a word poem. Add illustrations. Duplicate.
3. Use three-inch by five-inch cards in a file box with words on the cards to be used to germinate individual writing ideas. Have the children write stories using some of these phrases that might give a lonely feeling: empty and quiet, aching heart, homeless, surrounded by a stillness, steady downpour of rain, disappointed sighing, faint toot of an engine, longing for the sight of someone, sad and anxious eyes, shut in by towering trees, lengthening purple shadows.
4. Write a story using some phrases from a card file box that might give a gay feeling: flowers turning to the sun, wishes coming true, squirrels scampering, a shining blanket of white snow, white cottages freshly painted, a rainbow bridge in the sky, boys whistling while fishing, birds singing in the trees.
5. Write a story using some phrases from a card file box that might give a spooky feeling: dark mysterious shadows, round and smiling moon, branches bending and groaning, black and scary night, listening and shivering, shutters banging back and forth, sudden hooting of an owl, sighing, sobbing wind, creeping closer and closer, anxiously listening.
6. Have a card file (three inches by five inches) consisting of cards on which single paragraphs are written. These paragraphs provide the first paragraphs of stories. Tell pupils to choose a card and write a story. Be sure that the plot is introduced by the paragraph. The climax of the story should come to a logical conclusion.